

REMARKS

Claims 1-2 are pending in the present application. Claims 13 and 14 have been added, leaving claims 1, 2, 13, and 14 for consideration upon entry of the present amendment. No claim fees are due as two independent claims (3 and 4) have been canceled while two new independent claims (13, 14) have been added.

1. The anticipation rejection of claim 1 in view of Japan 02-207865.

The present invention as claimed is directed to a coating apparatus for producing "a silver salt photothermographic material" which has the benefit of not resulting in streaking problems on the coating surface, even when employed over an extended period of time (See page 3, line 17 through page 4, line 2).

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Japan 02-207865. Claim 1 has been respectfully amended. No new matter has been added.

It is respectfully asserted that Japan 02-207865 does not disclose the sub-paragraph (a) of claim 1:

"(a) a supplier ~~for supplying structured to separately supply~~ a photosensitive layer liquid coating composition comprising a silver component and a non-photosensitive protective layer liquid coating composition; and"

See for example present Figures 1 and 2 with separate supplies 30 and 31 for feeding slot coater 10 at upper slit 12 with protective layer 31, and for separately feeding slot coater 10 at lower slit 11 with photosensitive layer 30, respectively.

The USPTO argues that a "a supplier" is *inherently* taught by Japan 02-207865 at Figure 2 and arrow A and does not actually show a supply or supplier apparatus *per se*. Applicants respectfully note that arrow A shows only one port and not separate material feeds as claimed in claim 1.

In view of the foregoing, claim 1 is not anticipated under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as all of the limitations of claim 1 are not taught by Japan 02-20786. Thus, the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) has been respectfully overcome.

10/689,454
KOT-0083

II. The obviousness rejection of independent claim 2 in view of Ghosh, US 5,484,629.

Claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious in view of Ghosh '629.

Ghosh discloses in the ABSTRACT that "A coating apparatus (10) for coating a radiation-sensitive emulsion (30) on a photographic support (24) is fabricated from hopper bars (12) having a ceramic coating surface (20).

Present independent Claim 2 has been amended in similar fashion to claim 1. No new matter has been added.

It is respectfully asserted that Ghosh does not teach or suggest sub-paragraph (a) of claim 2 wherein:

"a) a supplier for supplying structured to separately supply a photosensitive layer liquid coating composition comprising a silver component and a non-photosensitive protective layer liquid coating composition; and"

For example, see Figure 1 of Ghosh '607 wherein feeds 16 feed a single "coating liquid" as described at col. 3, lines 30-33. No discussion of the claimed limitations of claim 2 is present in Ghosh '607, i.e. a supplier structured to separately supply ... Instead, Ghosh '607 is directed to forming and finishing the ceramic in a certain manner and does not discuss or suggest any specifics of a supplier structure as claimed in claim 2. Thus all of the limitations of claim 2 are not taught or suggested by Ghosh '607. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 2 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) has been respectfully overcome.

III. The obviousness rejection of claim 2 in view of the combination of Ghosh and Fukuda.

Claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obviousness over Ghosh in view of Fukuda. Claim 2 has been amended as discussed above at section II.

Fukuda does not make up for the deficiencies discussed above at II and the same arguments above apply. Therefore, a *prima facie* case of obviousness as required by MPEP 706.02(j) citing the patent laws is not established by the combination.

10/689,454
KO1-0083

IV. New claim 13.

As shown in Figure 2 of Japan '865 and the English Abstract, applicants (who can read Japan '865) also note that '865 discloses on page 2, in left-low column, in lines 3-14 that "In Fig. 2 showing coating liquid discharging port 7, front edge surface 5 is formed on the upper side, and back edge surface 6 is formed on the lower side. The flexible non-magnetic base film 8 is fed in the arrow mark D along the front edge surface 5 and the back edge surface 6, and magnetic coating which has been discharged from the coating liquid discharging port 7 is coated onto the base film 8, thereby magnetic coating layer 9 is formed. To be worth notice here, the average center-line surface roughness (Ra) is set to be less than $5.0 \mu\text{m}$ ".

That is, in Japan '865, the back edge surface 6 of the lip plane which is provided downstream of coating liquid discharging port 7, has the center-line surface roughness (Ra) of less than $5.0 \mu\text{m}$ as can be seen by Figure 2.

In contrast, in the present invention, as shown in Fig. 2, photosensitive layer liquid coating composition 30 is discharged from lower layer slit 11 and is applied onto web 41 while brought into contact with front lip 13 and center lip 14 which are arranged in the stated order viewed upstream of the web. On the other hand, protective layer liquid coating composition 31 discharged from upper layer slit 12 is also applied onto web 41 while brought into contact with back lip 15 which is arranged downstream. (See page 8, lines 9-17).

That is, photosensitive layer liquid coating composition 30 is brought into contact with front lip 13 and center lip 14. However, it is not brought into contact with the back lip 15.

Furthermore, as discussed on page 9, in lines 8-18, "It was then discovered that in order to minimize the deposition and secured adhesion of silver components, it was effective to finish the surface of front lip 13 and center lip 14, which came into contact with the photosensitive layer liquid coating composition, to result in near mirror plane smoothness. The aforesaid investigations were conducted further. As a result, it was proved that when the center line surface roughness of aforesaid lips 13 and 14 was $0.5 \mu\text{m}$ or less, no problems occurred due to adhesion of silver salts".

10/689,454
KOT-0083

Accordingly, Japan '865 does not disclose or suggest the feature (b) of new claim 3 in which the slot coater (10) comprising a lip plane (13, 14 in Fig. 2) provided upstream, in a conveyance direction of the web, of a slit (12) from which the non-photosensitive protective layer liquid coating composition (31) is discharged, which comes into contact with the photosensitive layer liquid coating composition, wherein a center-line surface roughness Ra of the lip plane is equal to or less than 0.5 μm .

Accordingly, new claim 3 patentably distinguishes over Japan '865 and the other references, under 35 U.S.C. §102 as well as under 35 U.S.C. §103.

V. New claim 14.

Applicants note that the references do not disclose or suggest the feature (b) of new claim 4 in which the slide coater (20) comprising a slide plane (25) provided downstream of a slit (22) from which the photosensitive layer liquid coating Composition (33) is discharged and flows toward the web (41), which comes into contact with the photosensitive layer liquid coating composition, wherein a center-line surface roughness Ra of the slide plane is equal to or less than 0.5 μm . (See support on page 11, line 11 through page 12, line 2)

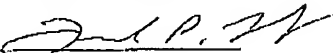
Accordingly, new claim 4 patentably distinguishes over Ghosh and Fukuda, and the other references, taken alone or in combination, under 35 U.S.C. §102 or 35 U.S.C. §103.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that this application be allowed and a Notice of Allowance issued. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned for any reason.

If there are any charges with respect to this amendment, or otherwise, please charge with respect to the fee them to Deposit Account No. 06-1130 maintained by Applicant's attorneys.

Respectfully submitted,

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KOT-0083